

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Markup of H.R. 4342, the “Domain Openness Through Continued
Oversight Matters (DOTCOM) Act of 2014”
April 9, 2014

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today we continue our efforts to protect Internet freedom. One of America’s greatest exports is our steadfast belief in freedom of speech, and the Internet has allowed us to share this ideal with the rest of the world.

But as we all work to bring the Internet to people around the globe, there are governments and regimes that continue to restrict their citizens’ access to its vast information and communication tools. We cannot ignore the hostility of countries like China, Iran, Russia, and Turkey toward openness and the free flow of information.

The Internet continues to evolve as a network without borders, and the United States has always been a stalwart defender of its freedom to spread ideas. As recently as the 2012 World Conference on International Telecommunications in Dubai, we have seen that other governments would like to impose economic and social regulation on the Internet – actions that are inconsistent with the spirit of the Internet and who we are as Americans.

The DOTCOM Act is a deliberate and transparent next step in this effort to ensure that freedom remains the principal tenet of the Internet. It simply allows the GAO, our government’s watchdog, to examine every angle and possible consequence of the administration’s proposal before we move forward. This process demands tough questions and scrutiny. The legislation does not say that we don’t trust NTIA or ICANN, and it does not say that we lack support for the multistakeholder model. It does not even predetermine that that this transition shouldn’t take place. All the DOTCOM Act says is that we should look before we leap.

This is a question of domestic U.S. policy and good government. Our interest and engagement in this process should exceed those nations who censor their citizens and desire to control the web. We must take our time and ensure that any successor to NTIA holds the same values we have instilled in the Internet and will resist efforts by governments to take control of the root zone. Once we transfer this oversight role away, there’s no going back.

The Internet changed the world, and we must ensure the world does not change the Internet. I urge my colleagues to support this bill and to ensure that our next steps are sure ones.

###